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Third Committee

Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 16 October 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)
later: Mr. Kováčik (Vice-Chair) ..... (Slovakia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Organizational matters (A/C.3/73/2)

1. **The Chair**, recalling that, at its 14th meeting, the Committee had approved by a recorded vote a proposal to seek a legal opinion from the United Nations Legal Counsel, said that that legal opinion had been issued in a document containing an exchange of letters between himself and the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Office of Legal Affairs (A/C.3/73/2). In that regard, he took it that the Committee wished to invite the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia to present his report and interact with the Committee.

2. *It was so decided.*

3. **The Chair** further suggested that, in view of the same legal opinion, the Committee should invite the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi to present his report and interact with the Committee.

4. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that his delegation had not endorsed the legal opinion provided, as the procedure for its issuance had been irregular and obscure. For example, the request had been conveyed to the Legal Counsel virtually minutes after the conclusion of the related vote. It was clear that the legal opinion, which constituted a recommendation and was not legally binding, was politically motivated. His delegation therefore requested a recorded vote on the proposal to invite the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi to present his report to the Committee.

5. **Mr. Charwath** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union in explanation of vote before the voting, said that European Union member States welcomed the clear opinion of the Office of Legal Affairs, which stated that there was a legal basis for the Third Committee to engage in a dialogue with the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, and upheld the principles of stability, legality and fairness. There were more than 60 mandate holders scheduled to engage with the Committee on issues important to the international community, and there should be no selectivity in the Committee's approach to them. In order to respect those States that had requested clarity on the issue, the European Union had not opposed the earlier proposal to seek a legal opinion, although it had voiced doubts about the need to do so. Now that the advice had been offered, it should be accepted. In that regard, European Union member States would vote in favour of the proposal and called on all Member States, especially those that had voted to extend the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi in the Human Rights Council, to do the same.

6. *At the request of the representative of Burundi, a recorded vote was taken on the proposal to invite the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi to present his report and interact with the Committee.*

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

Against:

Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gabon, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Abstaining:

Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka.

7. *The proposal was adopted by 73 votes to 33, with 32 abstentions.**

* The delegation of the Congo subsequently informed the Committee that it had intended to vote against the proposal and the delegation of Montenegro that it had intended to vote in favour.

8. **Mr. Ajayi** (Nigeria) said that his Government had always sought to integrate human rights principles into national policy and worked to cooperate with other Member States to advise them on the tenets of human rights and related mechanisms. Nigeria had abstained from voting in order to remain consistent in its support for the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council, which was the only credible avenue to address human rights violations. Nigeria was neither derogating from its duties to the United Nations nor discarding its solidarity with any country unduly placed in the spotlight in respect of human rights questions.

9. **Ms. Shikongo** (Namibia) said that the universal periodic review was the only viable way for countries to reflect upon human rights considerations. Country-specific mandates polarized and politicized the Third Committee. However, the Committee should also recall General Assembly resolution 58/316 on further measures for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and its own long-standing practice of abiding by rules and procedures. Resolutions establishing the offices of mandate holders, whether or not all States agreed with their existence, had been passed by a democratic process. It was not within the Committee's purview to undermine the work of other bodies by revisiting their resolutions. The invitation extended to mandate holders was an established practice that contributed to the Committee's positive relationship with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Owing to its view that the Committee should not pick and choose the mandates reporting to it, Namibia had abstained from voting.

10. **Mr. Phiri** (Zambia) said that his delegation recognized the careful and serious consideration that the Legal Counsel had given to the question put to it. However, there appeared to be a breach in procedure. Human Rights Council resolution 39/14 of 2018 called on the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi to submit its final report at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, while the conclusions of the legal opinion issued by the Legal Counsel relied on an earlier Human Rights Council resolution that had requested the report at the seventy-third session. That was a dangerous precedent.

11. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee), responding to the delegation of Burundi, said that the possibility that the Committee would request a legal opinion from the Legal Counsel had been raised at the Committee's first meeting and he had duly alerted the Office of Legal Affairs to that possibility. The Office of Legal Affairs had therefore already prepared a draft legal opinion, subject to the requisite clearances, when the Committee had made its formal request at its 14th meeting. For those reasons, the Committee's request and the response had been processed and issued quickly.

Agenda item 74: Promotion and protection of human rights (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of human rights instruments (*continued*) (A/73/40, A/73/44, A/73/48, A/73/56, A/73/140, A/73/207, A/73/264, A/73/281, A/73/282 and A/73/309)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*) (A/73/138, A/73/139, A/73/139/Corr.1, A/73/152, A/73/153, A/73/158, A/73/161, A/73/162, A/73/163, A/73/164, A/73/165, A/73/171, A/73/172, A/73/173, A/73/175, A/73/178/Rev.1, A/73/179, A/73/181, A/73/188, A/73/205, A/73/206, A/73/210, A/73/215, A/73/216, A/73/227, A/73/230, A/73/260, A/73/262, A/73/271, A/73/279, A/73/310, A/73/310/Rev.1, A/73/314, A/73/336, A/73/347, A/73/348, A/73/361, A/73/362, A/73/365, A/73/385 and A/73/396)

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (*continued*) (A/73/299, A/73/308, A/73/330, A/73/332, A/73/363, A/73/380, A/73/386, A/73/397, A/73/398 and A/73/404)

(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (*continued*) (A/73/36 and A/73/399)

12. **Mr. Mokhiber** (Chief, Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York), introducing the report of the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the right to development (A/HRC/39/18), said that the analysis of the right to development had focused on inequality among countries, taking into account the principles of self-determination and international cooperation, which had been codified in the Declaration on the Right to Development. Regarding self-determination, he underscored the need to preserve the policy space of countries.

13. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights (A/73/172), he said that seven States had submitted views which reflected both the positive and negative political, economic, cultural and social impacts of globalization.

14. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief (A/73/153), he said that governmental actions on those issues remained largely constitutional and legislative in focus and nature. There was therefore an urgent need for better implementation of the existing frameworks. It would also be useful to consider how elements of the action plan outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 of Human Rights Council resolution 34/32 could be leveraged to address issues of discrimination, intolerance and violence based on religion or belief within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the effects of terrorism and the enjoyment of human rights (A/73/347), he emphasized the potential critical role that human rights could play in preventing future acts of terrorism. Victims' rights to the truth and to remedies should be guaranteed in cases of human rights abuses caused both by acts of terrorism and by States' measures to counter terrorism.

16. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on human rights in the administration of justice (A/73/210), he noted the essential role that an independent and impartial judiciary played in the implementation of access to justice and the protection of human rights.

17. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the human rights treaty body system (A/73/309), he noted that the number of individual communications, inquiries and urgent actions had continued to increase. In that regard, additional resources, particularly for staff, were urgently needed to enable the United Nations to support Member States in meeting their treaty obligations.

18. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (A/73/230), he said that the Secretary-General had called for more coordinated efforts by the United Nations at the country level. In that regard, the Secretary-General would explore the development of a system-wide approach to strengthening civil society space and guiding United Nations support for human rights defenders.

19. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty (A/73/260), he said that women faced gender-based discrimination in the application of the death penalty, which was also used disproportionately against economically vulnerable individuals. In order to achieve universal abolition, States with moratoriums should strengthen policies against the death penalty, while abolitionist States should support other States in moving away from the death penalty by sharing good practices.

20. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on missing persons (A/73/385), he said that persons were often reported missing in the context of armed conflicts and in situations of violence, insecurity, organized crime, disaster and migration. In that regard, greater efforts to ensure accountability were needed.

21. Turning to country-specific situations and introducing the Secretary-General's report on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/73/299), he said that while the number of executions in that country had significantly decreased, the continued use of the death penalty, particularly against juvenile offenders, remained a matter of concern. There had been encouraging developments regarding the protection of women from violence, although the prosecution of women who campaigned against compulsory veiling and codified discrimination against women in the civil law persisted. An intensified crackdown on protesters, the censoring of social media users and the targeting of journalists inside and outside of the country were also matters of concern. Furthermore, a persistent pattern of intimidation, arrest, prosecution and ill treatment of human rights defenders and lawyers had been reported. The Secretary-General had welcomed the enhanced cooperation between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the one hand, and OHCHR and United Nations treaty bodies, on the other, and had encouraged the Government to engage with the newly appointed Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

22. Lastly, introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/73/308), he said that, in the context of rapprochement, the Korean Peninsula had witnessed a significant decrease in

tensions since the beginning of 2018. However, the prospects for peace could be undermined by a lack of progress in addressing long-standing human rights violations, including violations of the right to life, liberty and security of the person, and the right to a fair trial; restrictions on the right to freedom of movement and the right to freedom of expression, access to information and freedom of association and peaceful assembly; and chronic food insecurity and limited access to health care. In that regard, the Secretary-General had reiterated his offer of support from the United Nations system, including technical expertise, and had welcomed the constructive dialogue initiated by the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities to the country. The Secretary-General had urged the Government to consider the recommendations of the group of independent experts on accountability for human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to engage with the OHCHR office in Seoul to implement them.

23. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that the report of the Secretary-General on missing persons (A/73/385) confirmed that, since 2014, there had been a dramatic increase in persons reported missing during conflicts. The growing number of States that had taken measures to clarify the fate of missing persons and address the needs of families was encouraging. Noting that the 2011 report by the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on best practices in the matter of missing persons (A/HRC/16/70) had stressed the need to raise public awareness of that problem as a fundamental concern of international humanitarian law and human rights law, he suggested that the biennial resolution on the issue put forward by Azerbaijan, as well as the Secretary-General's relevant reports, could serve as appropriate forums to fulfil that need. Given the increase in the number of armed conflicts and the fact that the Third Committee considered the topic of missing persons only once every two years, his delegation requested that the next report be more comprehensive, contain action-oriented recommendations and, in line with the relevant General Assembly resolution, focus more directly on the issue of missing persons in the context of armed conflict.

24. **Mr. Aldahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, with regard to the right to development, unilateral measures had been taken which had interfered with Syrian civilians' access to food and basic needs. A group of States had established an illegal coalition outside the auspices of the United Nations that had destroyed hospitals, schools and dams, which represented hard-won development achievements. That coalition had also killed thousands of civilians directly, and many others indirectly, through its support for terrorists. His Government affirmed the need for collective action within the United Nations to prevent acts of intolerance and hatred and to counter extremism and the spread of populist ideas based on discrimination, racism and xenophobia. Regarding the reports on the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Democratic Republic of Korea and other States, his delegation rejected the use of the Third Committee and the United Nations human rights system to target countries for political reasons, while violations perpetrated by other States were disregarded.

25. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/73/308) contained politicized contents intended to defame and repress his country. The report had no relevance to the promotion and protection of human rights in the country. His delegation categorically rejected that report and similar politicized reports on other developing countries.

26. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the annual production of four nearly identical reports on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran could be attributed to a selective approach based on double standards, which further eroded the credibility of politicized United Nations mechanisms. The Secretary-General's report on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/73/299) only partially reflected the comments of the Iranian authorities and did not take into account the situation of all Iranians. Notably, the unilateral withdrawal of the United States of America from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which had been unanimously adopted by the Security Council, including the United States itself, was barely mentioned in the report. Indeed, the subsequent genocidal imposition of illegitimate and illegal sanctions, which violated the economic and social rights of Iranians, had not been included at all. The Government had provided an extensive response to the specific issues raised, the gravity of which did not warrant a country-specific report. All States, including Iran, were subject to improvement in their practices and laws, as long as the social norms acceptable to their citizens were not violated. His Government welcomed dialogue that was free of recriminations and blame, based on cooperation and mutual respect.

27. **Mr. Mokhiber** (Chief, Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York) said that he had taken note of the comments and responses from Member States.

28. **Mr. Shany** (Chair, Human Rights Committee), introducing the report of the Human Rights Committee (A/73/40), said that the Committee had reviewed 26 reports of States parties since its 120th session in July 2017. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the simplified reporting procedure adopted had been offered for use in 2014 by all States parties who had submitted an initial report. At its 120th session, the Committee had established a working group to assess the effectiveness of the simplified reporting procedure. While the Committee would issue the results at its 124th session, he could already share that the simplified procedure had been found to be effective, beneficial and had alleviated the reporting burden on States parties, although it had placed additional pressure on the Committee and the Secretariat. The Committee members were satisfied with the quality of the resulting dialogue, as were the participating States. He encouraged those States that had not yet opted to use the simplified procedure to do so.

29. A number of States parties had already benefited from the capacity-building programme established through General Assembly resolution 68/268 that supported the preparation of reports for treaty bodies. States parties should continue to seek the assistance of OHCHR in fulfilling their obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. With a view to addressing the problem of non-reporting and late reporting, the Committee had been preparing lists of issues, in the absence of reports, and conducting reviews of non- and late-reporting States parties. That practice had resulted in States parties responding and participating in the dialogue when they might not have otherwise done so. On two occasions, the Committee had decided to consider a State's written replies to the list of issues as a satisfactory substitute for the State report. The Committee coordinated with other treaty bodies to exchange ideas and keep abreast of their jurisprudence and procedures. It also planned to work with the Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights on a pilot project to develop a coordinated list of issues, conduct a back-to-back review of States and better align concluding observations.

30. With regard to the communications under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, since its 120th session the Committee had adopted 133 final decisions, as compared with 113 in the previous year. Despite increased productivity, it faced a growing backlog of individual communications as the pace of cases registered increased. There was also the challenge of limited resources in the Secretariat, particular in terms of staffing within OHCHR. The backlog in communications could not be addressed without a significant increase in the capacity of the Secretariat. That situation represented a serious threat to the credibility of the Human Rights Committee as a forum that could provide timely remedies to victims of human rights violations. In that regard, he welcomed the call by the Secretary-General for the provision of additional resources in his report on the status of the human rights treaty body system (A/73/309), and urged the Third Committee to implement the recommendations contained therein.

31. The Human Rights Committee had introduced several measures to maximize the meeting time allocated to communications and improve the quality of its work. One such measure was the procedure on repetitive communications adopted in March 2016. At its 118th session in October 2016, the Committee had adopted guidelines on reparation measures, which had improved the consistency of its jurisprudence. At the same session, it had decided to develop a process for inviting parties to communications involving complex issues of fact or domestic law to offer oral comments on the other party's submissions. In that regard, at its 121st session, for the first time, the Committee had held hearings in the presence of the authors' counsel and with the participation of the State party by videoconference. At the same session, the Committee had decided to extend the deadline for the submission of information from States parties on follow-up to concluding observations from one year to two years.

32. At its 120th session, the Committee had completed its first reading of the draft general comment on the right to life. The Committee had given serious consideration to the comments submitted by many States parties when revising the general comment, which it expected to adopt during its upcoming 124th session.

33. Turning to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268, he noted that the 10,700 word limit set out for all documents produced by treaty bodies posed a problem for key Human Rights Committee documents, such as its views on complex individual communications, rules of procedure and

general comments. He requested the States parties to introduce greater flexibility in the application of word limits when reviewing the resolution in 2020. The 2020 review of the treaty body system would be an important opportunity to further stabilize the system, streamline the reporting calendar, improve coordination between different reporting mechanisms and address the gap between the needs and the resources available.

34. *Mr. Kováčik (Slovakia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

35. **Mr. Al Ajmi** (Qatar) said that national legislation reflected his country's strong support for the promotion and protection of human rights and the Government's efforts to fulfil its commitments under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international instruments.

36. **Mr. McElwain** (United States of America) asked what immediate administrative steps could be taken to address the Human Rights Committee's large backlog in communications and avoid compromising its essential functions. He also requested a preliminary assessment of the effectiveness of the repetitive communications procedure adopted in 2016.

37. **Mr. Forax** (Observer for the European Union) said that, as in previous years, the European Union was concerned by overdue reports and the number of States parties that had failed to cooperate with the Human Rights Committee. He called on States parties to comply with their obligations. The European Union supported all efforts to improve the efficiency of the Human Rights Committee, particularly in view of its increased activities. His delegation had taken note of the provisional assessment of the simplified reporting procedure. In the light of the 2020 review of the treaty body system, he asked for an assessment of progress made towards realigning the working methods of the various treaty bodies and the outstanding requirements to ensure a strong and effective system.

38. **Ms. Přikrylová** (Czechia) said that Human Rights Council resolution 39/11 of 28 September 2018 had endorsed the draft guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs (A/HRC/39/28), which served as a practical tool for States to meet their obligations under article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Her country and several other States had sponsored the resolution, which also urged the dissemination and use of the guidelines. The right to equal participation in political and public affairs was not optional or discretionary. In that regard, she asked about the main challenges to assessing the implementation of article 25 of the Covenant and how the guidelines would benefit the work of treaty body committees.

39. **Mr. Fitzpatrick** (United Kingdom) said that his Government was committed to fulfilling its reporting obligation under article 40 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and asked what efforts were planned to address States' non-compliance with that obligation. His delegation had taken note of the Committee's concern regarding insufficient resources and continued to urge for creative solutions. His Government hoped to see continued progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268 and looked forward to its review.

40. **Ms. Chekrizova** (Russian Federation) said that while human rights mechanisms could assist States in the promotion and protection of human rights, the long-standing trend in the Human Rights Committee of acting outside of its mandate, including in its methods of work, was a matter of concern. Such actions, which created unnecessary duplication of work and were contrary to General Assembly resolution 68/268, included the development of guidelines that were not legally binding. The Committee must strictly abide by the provisions of the aforementioned resolution, including the word limits established for its documentation. While doing so might pose a problem for the Committee, State parties were expected to abide by the limits set for their submissions. The same rules should therefore apply to the Committee.

41. The Human Rights Committee was entitled to draft general comments. However, imposing them on States as additional obligations or legally binding instruments clearly went beyond the Committee's mandate. Furthermore, the follow-up procedures established by the Committee placed an unjustifiable burden on the Committee that required additional resources from the United Nations regular budget. They also made the Committee's work less effective and were not conducive to a constructive dialogue between States and experts. The regular provision of periodic reports by States parties was sufficient as an accountability system. Her delegation trusted that the problem areas it had identified would be duly taken into account in the Committee's future work.

42. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that the Sudan welcomed practical measures to align practices across all human rights mechanisms. He asked whether that process could include special procedures mandate holders, in order to avoid duplication of demands on

States, and whether it could take into account the universal periodic review, which monitored States on an annual basis. He also wondered whether any consideration had been given to renaming the Human Rights Committee, as the reference to a committee was not only misleading but was also easily confused with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As a developing country, the Sudan attached particular importance to economic, social and cultural rights and to the collective rights of people in its pursuit of poverty alleviation.

43. **Mr. Shany** (Chair, Human Rights Committee) said that, in order to deal with the backlog in communications, the Human Rights Committee urgently needed additional staff in the petitions team of OHCHR. The five such positions requested in 2017 had been denied, leading to the current backlog. Member States with Junior Professional Officer agreements with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had been approached to potentially fill the gap.

44. The Committee would issue its report on repetitive communications in 2019. A preliminary assessment indicated that the procedure had improved efficiency and fostered a consistent approach across cases that had similar facts, and sometimes even similar applicants.

45. Treaty bodies were systematically analysing their rules of procedure together in order to maintain consistency, to the extent possible, when reformulating them. They were also working on a framework to set out common elements in follow-up procedures. The opportunities to align treaty body practices with those of special procedures mandate holders was limited, as treaty bodies were bound to abide by the provisions of their respective founding documents. However, the Human Rights Committee closely followed the work conducted by mandate holders through the universal periodic review and often used the resulting recommendations to initiate dialogue with States parties.

46. Although the Human Rights Committee was at times confused with the Human Rights Council, its name had been designated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. There was no hierarchy among covenants and treaty bodies; the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had been established by the Economic and Social Council 20 years after the Human Rights Committee was founded.

47. The problem of overdue reports related in part to the question of insufficient resources, and the 2020 review of the treaty body system would need to address that issue. The formula set out in General Assembly resolution 68/268 for calculating the meeting time and support staff required by the Human Rights Committee had been based on the actual number of reports received, not the total number expected from States parties. In that regard, the establishment of fixed reporting calendars should be considered. The universal periodic review process provided a good model, given that all States submitted their related reports on time.

48. He was pleased to see the Human Rights Council and Member States taking interest in the implementation of article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Human Rights Committee would consider the draft guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs to the extent that they were compatible with its mandate. Both States parties and civil society could raise awareness of the need to implement that right by dedicating more attention to it in their reporting. For its part, the Committee was available to provide technical assistance to States working on the issue.

49. Given the legalistic nature of its work, the Human Rights Committee made efforts to stay within the scope of its mandate. However, it welcomed dialogue with States on any instruments that were not perceived to meet that criteria. The Committee had recognized that follow-up reporting generated an additional burden on both States parties and the Committee and had therefore limited the number of follow-up cycles to one, with scope for exceptions. The follow-up reporting procedure had been developed in order to regulate the periodicity of reporting, allowing States to provide shorter reports on specific issues.

50. **Ms. Bras Gomes** (Chair, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), presenting an oral report on the work of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, said that, as recommended in General Assembly resolution 68/268, the Committee had successfully initiated a simplified reporting procedure in 2018. Given that the new procedure aimed to facilitate dialogue on recurring issues, and in view of the limited capacity of the Secretariat and the Committee, the simplified reporting procedure would only be used for countries with a long history of reporting to the Committee and was not offered on a general basis or to non-reporting States. The Committee continued to collaborate with the Human Rights

Committee and other treaty bodies in order to improve cooperation in the review of State submissions and identify ways to reduce the reporting burden.

51. Regarding the issue of long overdue initial country reports, the Committee had approached relevant States, United Nations country teams and OHCHR to identify ways that States could be assisted. Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Mali, the Niger and Bangladesh had met their first reporting obligation in 2018, at times overcoming resource constraints to do so. She encouraged those States to continue their engagement with the Committee, including through the submission of follow-up reports. She called on those States that had not yet submitted their first report to make every effort to do so and reiterated the Committee's offer of support in that regard.

52. She welcomed the recent ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by Honduras and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Nevertheless, the number of ratifying States remained low. She urged non-ratifying States with doubts about interpretations of the provisions of the Covenant to consider the views adopted by the Committee, which strove to act with rigour and fairness when examining individual communications. The Committee had experienced a 400 per cent increase in the number of communications received over the past year. As States parties had not approved additional meeting time or resources when the Optional Protocol had entered into force, the Committee would be unable to discharge its mandate without the allocation of additional resources.

53. Austerity programmes continued to impact the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights. In both developing and developed countries, severe cuts in social spending had violated core rights, for example by driving older persons into poverty and children into food insecurity. The Committee maintained that retrogressive measures in the context of the fulfilment of Covenant rights were only permissible when the "minimum core content" of rights was preserved at all times. Austerity programmes had also contributed to growing inequality, undermining the enjoyment of rights without discrimination.

54. Following the recent release of the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the Committee had issued a statement drawing attention to the negative and increasing impact of climate change on the exercise of the rights to health, food, water and sanitation. The Committee would continue to be seized of the question and provide States with guidance on climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, in fulfilment of their duties under the Covenant.

55. Advances in science and technology helped people to fight disease, prepare for natural disasters and improve working conditions, but also brought about human rights challenges. In that regard, the Committee had decided to formulate a general comment on article 15 (b) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: on the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, and on other provisions of article 15 related to science. She invited States parties to participate in the process by submitting written comments on the draft general comment, which the Committee aimed to issue in 2019.

56. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador) said that his country was in the process of preparing its 2019 report for the Committee and was grateful for the technical and capacity-building support provided in that regard. The 2020 review of the human rights treaty body system, called for in General Assembly resolution 68/268, should include a comprehensive assessment of elements that limited the efficiency of all treaty bodies. He suggested that States give a more active role to the meetings of States parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. While such meetings currently only considered the election of members of the Human Rights Committee, they could also serve as a forum for policy discussion and analysis. In that regard, the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities offered a good model.

57. **Ms. Eyheralde Geymonat** (Uruguay), speaking also on behalf of Portugal and as the Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, asked for a general assessment of the implementation of the Optional Protocol and how the number of ratifying States could be increased. Noting that the Secretary-General's report on the status of the human rights treaty body system (A/73/309) had identified inadequate resources as the primary limitation to achieving an effective system, she asked what could be done to involve Member States in the 2020 review of the treaty body system

58. **Ms. Yoon** Seong-Mee (Republic of Korea) said that the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was indispensable to achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Her Government welcomed the initiative by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to draft a general comment on article 15 (b) of the Covenant, which should strengthen the dissemination of scientific progress using a rights-based approach. Her delegation also welcomed the Committee's efforts to further adopt the simplified reporting procedure. The Korean Government had submitted its first periodic report in May 2016, which had been reviewed by the Committee in September 2017. In August 2018, the Government had published its third national action plan which included a new section on business and human rights, developed in consultation with the National Human Rights Commission of Korea and civil society.

59. **Mr. Forax** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union valued the efforts made by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to adopt general comments, including under article 15 of the Covenant, and its useful interactions with other treaty bodies to discuss both shared thematic issues and working methods. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268, the Committee had made good progress on addressing the backlog of country reports. He urged the Committee to take similar measures to address the backlog in communications. The failure of States to comply with their reporting obligations was a matter of concern. He asked whether the support offered through the capacity-building programme had been of benefit and whether the simplified reporting procedure would be assessed or extend for use by additional States parties. The European Union welcomed the statements on the situation of human rights defenders delivered by the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies at their 30th meeting (A/73/140). In that regard, noting that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was the only treaty body that had not endorsed the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals (HRI/MC/2015/6), he asked how the Committee intended to address allegations of such behaviour against those seeking to cooperate with human rights treaty bodies.

60. **Ms. Bras Gomes** (Chair, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) said that the Committee's work with United Nations country teams and regional offices helped to bridge the gaps for States parties that were delayed in their reporting, particularly those that faced challenges such as conflict and post-conflict situations and had limited resources in their foreign ministries. In some States, the establishment of a national mechanism dedicated to human rights reporting obligations had been useful in ensuring timely submissions. The capacity-building programme established under General Assembly resolution 68/268 had also reassured some States parties that submissions to the Committee constituted a dialogue rather than an adversarial encounter. The Committee hoped that the use of webcasts and videoconferences for its sessions could be maintained, as it had helped Latin American and Asian States in particular to involve national authorities in the reporting process. Given the protracted process to develop and adopt the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, for the sake of rights holders, the Committee hoped to stave off a backlog in communications, and, in that regard, urged Member States to allocate the number of OHCHR staff required to service additional meeting time given to consider communications. The simplified reporting procedure was used with States with a reporting history in order to facilitate a focus on specific issues, although the procedure did have the potential to reduce the burden on additional States. In order to extend the procedure to States that had not submitted an initial report, additional capacity was needed in the Secretariat to conduct sufficient research.

61. With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals, she noted that the Committee had issued a stand-alone concluding observation that called on States to take into account economic, social and cultural rights when pursuing the Goals. The Committee was also preparing a statement for the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development. While the Committee had not endorsed the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals, it had issued its own statement on human rights defenders and recognized their critical advocacy role in many issues relevant to the Committee, including the use of land and productive resources and the accountability of extractive industries. Indeed, in its concluding observations on a number of States parties, the Committee had called for investigations of acts against human rights defenders, the implementation of specific legislation to defend them and the organization of awareness-raising measures to foster a climate of tolerance for their work. Specific paragraphs on human rights defenders had also been included in the Committee's general comments No. 18 (2005) on the right to work, No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work and

No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the Covenant in the context of business activities.

62. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that in view of the complexity of migration flows, which occurred both to and from the global South, CELAC called for a better understanding of migration patterns and the related conditions within and across geographic regions and subregions. Noting the synergies between international migration and economic, political, social and cultural development at the national, regional and global levels, he drew attention to the need for migration flows to and from the Latin American and Caribbean region to be safe, orderly and regular in order to safeguard the human rights and dignity of migrants and their families.

63. Negotiations on the text of the Global Pact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration had concluded in July 2018, and the Global Pact would be adopted at the International Conference on the Global Compact for Migration in Marrakesh, Morocco, in December 2018. It would then become the first cooperation framework on international migration under the auspices of the United Nations. The CELAC countries supported the Global Pact in its entirety and looked forward to its adoption. They also anticipated with interest the proposal on modalities for the International Migration Review Forum established in the Global Pact. That proposal, which would be subject to negotiations in 2019, should address international migration and development in a comprehensive manner. Origin, transit and destination countries must work together to harness the benefits of and find solutions to the challenges of international migration. The Global Compact would provide the framework required to promote and protect the rights and freedoms of migrants, as called for in the Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

64. Regrettably, xenophobic political narratives had become widespread in recent times. Efforts to resolve the real challenges relating to migration should include dispelling alarmist distortions of its effects. In that regard, political leaders must take responsibility to reframe national discourses on migration and enact policy reform. Migrants made positive and profound contributions to the economic and social development of host societies and helped respond to their demographic trends and labour shortages. Migrants also contributed to the development of origin countries, including through the participation of diasporas in economic development and reconstruction.

65. Member States should fulfil the commitments undertaken in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants to reduce the costs of labour migration, promote ethical recruitment practices between sending and receiving countries, and facilitate simpler interactions between diasporas and their countries of origin. Those commitments should also be integrated into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

66. Transit and destination States should effectively promote and protect the rights of child migrants, regardless of their migration status, and States should address irregular migration from a humanitarian perspective so that the implementation of policies prioritized the best interests of the child, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, countries of origin, transit and destination should avoid inappropriate detention procedures that obstructed the legal and procedural rights of migrants, and, where appropriate, should guarantee return procedures for migrants, regardless of their migration status, giving special attention to women, adolescents and unaccompanied or separated children. Child migrants, in particular unaccompanied migrant children, must be provided with access to psychosocial and health services and education, ensuring that the best interest of the child was a basic consideration. In that regard, the recent implementation of policies to separate migrant children from their parents and relatives, driven by their migration status, was a matter of concern. The international community must work to end the detention of migrant children.

67. Member States should implement gender-sensitive policies and programmes for women migrant workers, in line with the Global Pact. Now was the time to take concrete action to protect women migrant workers against exploitation and violence and ensure respect for their dignity, fair conditions, decent work and their full integration into the workforce. CELAC also underscored the right of migrants to safe and voluntary return to their countries of origin and the need to create social and political domestic conditions to facilitate their productive social inclusion.

68. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova,

said, in respect of agenda items 74 (a) and (d), that there was no hierarchy or subordination among human rights. The United Nations human rights system was neither a forum for some States to lecture others, nor a place where flagrant human rights violations and abuses could be excused by its pursuit of poverty alleviation and social development. The European Union and its member States remained fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, all of which were universal, inalienable, interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. That commitment included a constant effort to continue improving the realization of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights within European Union countries. In that regard, in 2019, the European Union would adopt its guidelines on water and sanitation, in fulfilment of its commitment to achieve access to safe drinking water and sanitation worldwide. The European Union and its member States also remained fully committed to fulfil the human right to health.

69. The European Union was gravely concerned by acts of violence and harassment against human rights defenders, civil society and indigenous people, including cases of enforced disappearance and summary executions. For example, some 400 environmental rights defenders had been assassinated worldwide over the past two years, with the situation remaining extremely worrying in Latin America, South Asia and South-East Asia. Such acts must come to an end. Malicious prosecutions, travel bans, punitive registration regimes and restrictions on the receipt of funding had also been perpetrated against human rights defenders and civil society. The European Union deeply regretted that intimidation and reprisals against civil society organizations and human rights defenders cooperating with the United Nations and the representatives of its human rights mechanisms had become a recurrent phenomenon, including during the universal periodic review process. The European Union would continue to support civil society and human rights defenders wherever they were in danger.

70. The European Union commended the valuable work of OHCHR and welcomed the appointment of Michelle Bachelet as the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A strong, proactive and independent OHCHR was crucial to ensure a cohesive United Nations human rights system. In that context, the European Union, in conjunction with Member States from around the world, had recently launched the Good Human Rights Stories Initiative. Weaknesses in the system were not an excuse for disengagement. On the contrary, it was essential to fully fund and resource OHCHR to ensure that it was able to adequately support the human rights system.

71. The full realization of economic, social and cultural rights also implied a merciless fight against corruption, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16. Free and independent media, clear legislation and respect for the principles of the rule of law, including an effective and independent judiciary, were the best defences against corruption. She called on all States to condemn violence against journalists and media workers; take steps to improve the safety of journalists, in particular women journalists; and bring perpetrators and instigators of such violence to justice. The European Union reaffirmed its determination to continue promoting and protecting freedom of opinion and expression as rights to be exercised by everyone everywhere, based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and universality.

72. Turning to agenda items 74 (b) and (c), and speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, she said that the European Union continued to support and defend the independence of the mandate of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office. It rejected the view expressed by some States that human rights violations and abuses should not be addressed in international forums or that economic and social development justified the ranking of human rights, which were universal, inalienable, interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. The United Nations human rights system must remain an essential platform for the international community to denounce human rights violations and abuses wherever they occurred and to seek accountability. Indeed, the European Union itself and its member States were not flawless and remained open to criticism, including from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, which regularly identified internal weaknesses.

73. Permanent members of the Security Council and members of the Human Rights Council bore a particular responsibility to support all three pillars of the United Nations: human rights, peace and security, and development. In that respect, the European Union was deeply worried by the attempts by some States to undermine the foundations of the human rights system, including by reducing the allocation of funds for human rights-related posts in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. There was also a clear contradiction between the stated commitment of States to

multilateralism, their presence in the Human Rights Council and their non-signature or ratification of core United Nations human rights conventions.

74. Accordingly, the European Union called on China to ratify without further delay and abide by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; on Malaysia, Myanmar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and South Sudan to finally accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; on the United States of America to finally ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and on Botswana, Malaysia, Mozambique, Myanmar and Saudi Arabia to accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It also urged India, Iran, Myanmar, the Sudan and the other non-States parties to accede to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In the same vein, the European Union was seriously concerned about the continuing refusal of an increasing number of States to grant OHCHR and human rights mechanisms access to their territories. She called on all States to issue a standing invitation to special procedures mandate holders.

75. Despite the momentum of dialogue on peace and security, there had been no tangible progress on human rights in North Korea, where the situation remained grave. The European Union called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to urgently improve the situation of human rights, sign and ratify additional United Nations human rights conventions, and invite the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and special procedures mandate holders to visit the country.

76. The European Union continued to view with serious concern the restrictions on freedom of expression and the attacks, arbitrary arrests and detention of human rights defenders, journalists and human rights lawyers in Cambodia, China, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Viet Nam, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol illegally annexed by the Russian Federation, and the areas of eastern Ukraine controlled by so-called separatists. In some of those places, public prosecutors were seeking the death penalty in trials that raised doubts about the respect of due process. The European Union called on the Governments of Cambodia, Nicaragua, the Philippines and Venezuela to ensure the proper functioning of democratic institutions, uphold respect for the rule of law and human rights and, in particular, to guarantee freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly and association, and the independence of the judiciary. It also called upon Israel to uphold international humanitarian law and human rights with regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

77. The European Union called on China to fully implement the recent concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD/C/CHN/CO/14-17), in which the Committee had recommended that China change its policy in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. The European Union reiterated its calls for China to respect freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression, as well as the rights of persons belonging to ethnic or national minorities, in particular in Xinjiang, where there had been an expansion of political re-education camps.

78. The European Union emphasized the urgent need to end the culture of impunity in the States where the worst forms of human rights violations, including against children, took place: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar/Burma, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. It called on all parties to hold the perpetrators of those violations and abuses to account and to introduce and pursue transitional justice.

79. The European Union was appalled by the detailed findings of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar pointing to the commission of the gravest crimes against humanity committed by military and security forces, possibly even amounting to genocide in northern Rakhine State. During its thirty-ninth session the Human Rights Council had adopted a resolution, presented jointly by the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to create an independent mechanism to collect and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed in Myanmar/Burma since 2011, and to expedite independent criminal proceedings in national, regional or international courts or tribunals, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), that had or might in the future have jurisdiction over those crimes.

80. The European Union called on Burundi to re-establish full cooperation with the OHCHR office in Bujumbura, including by accepting a visit from a team of experts to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and by continuing to cooperate with the ICC investigation.

81. The European Union condemned the atrocities that continued to be perpetrated in Syria by all parties, in particular by the Syrian regime, and called for immediate action to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions. The systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights must end and those responsible must be held accountable. The European Union, since 2011, continued to support the documentation of violations and efforts to gather evidence in view of future legal action by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic, which continued to prepare for accountability measures, including through ICC and national jurisdictions. The European Union called on all parties, in particular the Syrian regime, to ensure full and timely access for the delivery of humanitarian aid to populations in need.

82. The European Union called for a continuation of efforts to support and strengthen ICC so that it could fulfil its mandate and improve its ability to investigate and prosecute the most serious international crimes. It also urged those countries that had not yet signed or ratified the Rome Statute, including China, Russia and the United States, to do so.

83. The death penalty constituted a serious violation of human rights and dignity. The European Union opposed its use in all circumstances and called on the few States that still used the death penalty to immediately end mass executions, executions broadcast on television, death sentences based on forced confessions and military trials of civilians, and not to apply the death penalty for offences committed by those under 18 years of age.

84. **Mr. Hattrem** (Norway), speaking also on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries, namely Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden, said that, despite the momentum provided by the #MeToo movement, Member States must work harder to promote and protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls. They should have the right to make decision regarding their own bodies, free from coercion, harassment and violence. Given the role that human rights defenders and civil society played in holding Governments to account and catalysing change, it was deeply concerning when Governments committed reprisals and limited civil society space. That was a symptom of a highly troubling opposition towards transparency and accountability toward their own citizens. Threats to press freedom across the world, and escalating harassment and violence against journalists, must be taken seriously. In recent years, young people had been demanding more democracy, transparency and respect for their human rights. But in some States, the young were losing hope. Democracy, human rights and the rule of law were essential elements in sustainable societies where youth were given opportunities to influence decision-making and to shape their own destiny.

85. The human rights pillar was not receiving adequate attention. In line with the 2030 Agenda, the rights of indigenous peoples and people living in poor and marginalized situations should be promoted and protected. Stability could not be secured through deterrence and military capacity alone. Investment in the human rights pillar would, in the long run, lead to a better balance and reduced demands within the other two pillars.

86. **Mr. Carazo** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, said that the population of older persons was projected to reach 1.4 billion by 2030, a rapid increase that would affect the developing world most dramatically. Greater attention must therefore be paid to the challenges affecting older persons, including multiple forms of discrimination, particularly against those in vulnerable groups. Policies, programmes and legal frameworks must be designed and implemented to effectively and specifically promote the full enjoyment of their human rights in order to ensure their dignity, empowerment and active participation in society.

87. Through its resolution 65/182, the General Assembly had called for stronger protection for the human rights of older persons by identifying gaps in the international framework and possible solutions. The Group maintained that the existing legal framework and human rights treaty body system were not sufficient to effectively promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons. In that regard, a specific, universal and legally binding document on the human rights of older persons would address the current regulatory dispersion, foster national policies to better define the responsibilities of States and strengthen monitoring mechanisms. The Group stood ready to engage in open and frank discussions to determine the best way to fill the gaps and develop further instruments and measures. It called upon all Member States to do the same.

88. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland) said that in many countries, hostile nationalism, racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination had been on the rise. Moreover, security measures taken in response to the phenomena of terrorism and violent extremism at times competed directly with human rights. A key aspect of Swiss foreign policy, in keeping with its humanitarian tradition, was the prevention of torture. Preventive measures must be taken to eliminate conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, facilitate compliance with international humanitarian law and encourage dialogue. Her Government was committed to implementing the Appeal of 13 June 2016, in which Switzerland, in conjunction with 70 other Member States, had called for better integration of human rights into conflict prevention, taking into account early warning and early intervention measures, and reinforcing the exchange of information between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council. In that regard, the Government looked forward to working with the new High Commissioner for Human Rights.

89. Switzerland remained concerned about growing restrictions on civil society in many countries, including violations of the rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression committed on the pretext of security, national sovereignty or the fight against terrorism. Human rights defenders, journalists and political figures were too often subject to arrest, arbitrary detention, psychological and physical violence and even torture. Switzerland called on all States to reverse that negative trend, eliminate impunity and guarantee a safe environment conducive to the activities of civil society.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.